Name: Barbara Shafer

Comments on Fee Increase Proposal

I am writing to object to the proposed fee increase to fund the State Bar of Michigan operations. I object to the $80 increase requested by the Representative Assembly and to the $50 increase on which the Supreme Court is accepting comment. These increased fee proposals were presented in the January 2022 issue of the Michigan Bar Journal.

According to the message from the State Bar president on pages 9 and 10, among the State Bar's funding needs are programs to provide mental health services; to improve public understanding of "our work and the legal system;" and to support programs that direct support for greater access to justice including "advocacy for the legal aid community" and "maintenance of Michigan's pro bono service infrastructure."

Public Act 1935, No. 58, provides for a state bar to regulate the conduct and activities of its members and to make proper disposition of complaints and grievances against its members. There is nothing in the enabling legislation that provides in any way, shape, form, or interpretation for the provision of members' mental health needs, education of the public on the legal system, or advancing legal aid or pro bono work.

If members want to contribute voluntarily to these causes, that is up to them. If the State Bar would get back to what it is legislatively authorized to do, it would not need any extra funding. And though I do not know how funds are currently being spent, I would guess that if the State Bar did only what it is legislatively authorized to do, the current yearly fee could be substantially reduced.

As the message from the State Bar president also states, "Attorneys have the unique privilege of being self-governed through the State Bar of Michigan . . . ." This self-governing aspect is the truth of the matter, and is the activity to which the State Bar should be limited.

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